

BEYOND CONTAINMENT TO LIBERATION

A Political Émigré Challenges Our "Machiavellian Liberalism"

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SINCE the end of World War II, the United States—rather to its own surprise—has become the haven for a large flock of political refugees, "sweating out" in America the eventual liberation of their homelands. A number of specialists among them are working with United States intelligence agencies or have accepted positions in private American business firms or schools. But most are receiving asylum and assistance through the National Committee for a Free Europe and its two main divisions, Radio Free Europe and the Mid-European Studies Center. These exiles have not suffered from any lack of hospitality. On the contrary, they have received employment, been set to work on interesting projects, and provided with the assistance of hundreds of graduates from America's finest universities. Yet I trust I breach no canon of courtesy when I say frankly that many of them have found their American experience discouraging and depressing.

The political exile from Eastern Europe is genuinely fond of the Americans among whom fate has thrown him, to say nothing of being grateful to them. But it does not take long before their relationship becomes salted with irritation and dismay. The under-

lying cause of this antagonism between the exiles and so many of their American friends and colleagues is the difference with which they approach the problem of the fight against Communism.

The exiles regard that fight as of primary importance to civilization, know that Communism's appetite for expansion cannot be appeased or placated, and are convinced that the Soviet dictatorship in Russia and East Europe can be overthrown by the democratic forces within these countries, if these forces are properly encouraged and guided. Their American colleagues regard the struggle against Communism as merely another trial in a life of good works, and—this is the crucial point—do not consider democracy and totalitarianism as necessarily irreconcilable. It does not take the exile long to discover that the staff of such an organization as the National Committee for a Free Europe—like many colleges, magazines, and government agencies—is permeated with what we might call, for want of a better term, Machiavellian liberalism.

THE Machiavellian liberal, whose leading oracles are Walter Lippmann and Barbara Ward, is not necessarily a "liberal" in any classic sense of the term. In fact, he is as likely to emerge from a patrician as from a plebeian or petty-bourgeois environment, and is almost as often a Republican as he is Democrat. His self-styled "liberalism" has one distinctive hallmark: an ambivalent attitude toward despots and despotism.

The Machiavellian liberal's fundamental premise is that the Bolshevik capture of power in Russia represents a historically "progressive revolution" in a "backward area." Although, as an "anti-Communist," he knows there is no democracy in the Soviet orbit, he is not sure that the peoples of East Europe

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could stomach too rich a diet of "Western" democracy. Communism east of Trieste and the Elbe represents a triumph of historical necessity. Industrialization and the liquidation of the "large landowners" are, in these benighted lands, moving along the line of civilized progress. To the Machiavellian liberal, the exile is an unfortunate fellow who may be personally charming but who is much too "emotional" and "prejudiced" about Communism, and in any case is a "historical" failure.

The Machiavellian liberal respects success above all else. He is deferential toward political power because this is something "real," and we live in a world of *Realpolitik*—our liberal is above all a "realist." He dislikes Communism but is intrigued by Marshal Tito, in whom he believes he has found a "secret weapon" in the struggle with Stalin.

"*Was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*," Hegel once remarked: "Whatever is, is rational." That, whether he knows it or not, is this latter-day liberal's motto; he believes in historical inevitability and slips into Marxism and/or Leninism without even being aware of it. His famous "objectivity" consists of not being bothered about Communism so long as it does not, at this time, move aggressively westward. No Communist sympathizer now or ever, as he is eternally assuring you (in most cases quite truthfully), he distrusts "emotional" (serious) anti-Communist writers and has a special contempt for the ex-Communist "renegade"; he hopes to do business with Stalin, and such people are apt to "rock the boat." He agrees with George Kennan (*Foreign Affairs*, April 1951) that "all distinctions between freedom and authority are relative," and that "90 per cent of them are no business of ours when they affect a foreign country." And with Walter Lippmann, who has written: "I believe in the simple idea that the danger of war in Europe lies not in the ideology of Communism nor in the internal system of the Soviet Union but in the fact that a powerful Soviet army, far more powerful than the occupation of Germany requires, is standing 500 miles west of the Soviet frontier." The Euro-

pean who encounters this Machiavellian liberal is bound to be reminded of the state of mind of Europe during the era of the Napoleonic wars. But he will note a difference: men like Talleyrand, Alexander I, and Metternich were intelligent enough to realize that they could stop war only if they could check the revolution that was bringing war. These statesmen understood that, for Bonaparte, revolution was an instrument for the subjugation first of France, then of all Europe. At the Congress of Vienna they sought to get at the root of the Napoleonic menace by destroying the revolutionary movement that was its source and inspiration. They established peace in Europe on the basis of a positive political principle, monarchical legitimacy; the peace lasted, with minor interruptions, for a hundred years.

THE statesmen of the West at Yalta, true Machiavellian liberals, lost the peace by refusing to recognize that Communism was a revolutionary movement whose momentum inevitably would bring about a war—unless it were countered and replaced by a different political principle, in this case the principle of representative democracy. They could see no connection between totalitarian terror at home and totalitarian aggression abroad. Whatever unpleasantness the association with Stalin entailed was explained away—and still is, for that matter—with a sage reference to "age-old Russian imperialism," or the innate affinity for despotism of the Asian mind.

The Machiavellian liberal mind is philistine to the core: "The Communists are different from us"—but let's not think about it too strenuously. Hamilton Fish Armstrong says that "we can meet the representatives of different social systems on a plane of complete equality and even understanding provided they will accept the same principle: live and let live." To the Kremlin's thesis that the Communists are the vanguard of a historically inevitable world revolution, he responds with the antithesis of—relativism: "There is no absolute truth in human affairs," and "the way to make progress is to

debate the differences." George Kennan would discount ideology entirely, maintaining that "forms of government are forged mainly in the fire of practice, not in the vacuum of theory." Common to all such political "analysis" is the presupposition that it is really a waste of time—and a bore to boot—to regard Communism as seriously as Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin have regarded it. Amateur geopolitics is much easier, and it is more pleasant to consult a map than to study Lenin's *The State and Revolution*. But, alas, *The State and Revolution* happens to be essential to an understanding of Soviet policy; if we have not read it, we shall never know why Stalin refuses to behave like the sick old czars of yesteryear, or how Soviet expansionism differs in essence from "age-old Russian imperialism."

THE Machiavellian liberal whom the East European meets today can often be identified by his admiration for the diplomacy of the British Foreign Office, which—whether in China or in the Balkans—he regards as the highest form of political realism, and this despite the fact that America, from Jefferson to Lincoln to Wilson, has stood in constant opposition to Britain's "balance of power" policy. He would laugh at the claim that the ideals of the American Revolution were closer to the yearnings of the people in Soviet-dominated lands than the ideals of the Bolshevik *coup d'état*. He blithely ignores the fact that it was a democratic revolution that overthrew the czar; and that Wilson's Fourteen Points had a greater impact on the East European masses than the Bolsheviks' overthrow of Kerensky's constitutional republic. And he has no patience with what he regards as the "old hat" idea that the great revolution still to be attained in East Europe is not Communism, industrialization, or agrarian reform, but, plainly and simply, national independence, the right of the people freely to choose their own rulers in their own national states within a European community. That is what America has represented to the people of East Europe, and this is their own unfulfilled dream.

The Machiavellian liberal considers all this to be "inadequate," "unadvanced," and even "irrelevant," and says—unconsciously echoing Leninist-Stalinist materialist determinism—that the political feelings of "Eastern" peoples are determined by their standard of living. But the East European knows that if America is to have a policy that appeals to the peoples of the satellite countries, she must base it on one prime theorem: lifting the standard of living comes after a government has been established that has the consent of the governed: without liberty there is neither security nor the fruits of modern industrial civilization. (Poland, Hungary, and Rumania, besides, are not Iran or Egypt; there was little mass exploitation or famine in the former countries, and the standard of living was astronomical by Soviet standards.) The greatest revolution to be achieved in East Europe is the establishment of a just national power, freely accepted by the people.

His tolerance of despots and despotisms makes the Machiavellian liberal skeptical of the possibility (or the desirability) of popular struggle by the peoples under Communist control against their Communist regimes. He overestimates the efficiency and strength of totalitarianism—both at home and abroad—so that he is inclined to take a dim view of the potentialities of shrewd psychological warfare against these regimes, and would prefer to restrict propaganda to the refuting of specific Communist lies about America while "holding out hope" to the enslaved peoples. At the same time, the Machiavellian liberal's overestimation of totalitarian capabilities makes him act as though the decisive battles of the worldwide civil war between representative government and despotism must needs be fought—though he hopes never to have to fight them—in the democratic rather than the Communist-controlled countries. The roundabout colossal effort of perfecting the "Western way of life" (including the immediate raising of the living standards of the entire Asian and African continents) seems to him more relevant and urgent than the organization of the anti-Communist

forces that actually exist within the Soviet orbit. Meanwhile, he hopes—by building up “areas of strength” in West Europe, South Asia, Africa, and the Americas—to arrive at some kind of negotiated “settlement” of the cold war.

AT THE same time, his passion for “objectivity” and cool *Realpolitik* makes the Machiavellian liberal rather wary of the increasing anti-Communist temper of the American people. The fires of anti-Communist passion among the American people would burn much, much higher—and would have a more enlightened glow—could the exiles reach them more directly and effectively. But apparently, the Machiavellian liberal would hate to see the American people eager to help the peoples now under totalitarian rule to liberate themselves by democratic revolutions, after the 1776 model. That would be anti-Communist hysteria: their preference is for “debating the differences” between tyranny and freedom. Consequently, the Machiavellian liberal would limit the exiles’ efforts at arousing sympathy and indignation in America over the sufferings of the enslaved peoples of Eastern Europe.

All of these attitudes and predispositions of Machiavellian liberalism are translated directly into the activities of—to take a good rather than an easy example—the National Committee for a Free Europe. I am sure the overwhelming majority of the exiles would prefer above all to be stationed in the frontier cities of the cold war—Trieste, Vienna, Berlin, etc.—turning out underground literature, making subversive radio broadcasts, working as intimately as possible with the underground organizations in their home countries. Yet only a small proportion of them are able to engage in such work at present (the Czech exiles who operate Radio Free Europe’s new radio station near Munich are happy exceptions), and what there is of it is done in the Empire State Building offices of Radio Free Europe under the close supervision of Americans. On the whole, the exile is kept busy at minor works and studies, and is enjoined to be careful, scholarly, and

above all “objective”; generally, these works are never published. As a result of these discretionary limits politely imposed on the exiles, only the cases of the Catholic Cardinal Mindszenty, the Americans Vogeler and Oatis, and the Titoist Rajk have been really dramatized for the American people. The selection of these three symbols is in itself interesting. The plain fact is that the fate of the many democratic leaders (including socialists, trade unionists, and liberal intellectuals) killed or imprisoned in East Europe has been, in effect, played down.

At the same time, this velvet curtain of silence prevents the exile from meeting his authentic American counterparts—labor leaders, farm leaders, educators, journalists, congressmen. Instead, he is invited to monthly teas where he meets solemn old ladies from Park Avenue to discuss the weather and family affairs. The secretaries of the Mid-European Center of the National Committee for a Free Europe are very careful to see that the exiles attend; their names are inscribed on a list, and their presence or absence is checked in a special notebook.

Seeing little of the real America in his isolated state, kept busy at scholarly studies that are rarely published and often become the Center’s property, the exile is seldom cheered by the encouragement of his colleagues. He tends to become gloomy and begins to doubt the authenticity of the American anti-Communist struggle with which he has associated himself. He wonders, at odd moments, what happened to the country that gave encouragement and support—as well as refuge—to such men as Kossuth and Masaryk. He hopes that the Stalinist dictatorship will be overthrown, but thinks privately that it will have to be, not because of, but despite, American leadership. In office suites in Manhattan and Washington, surrounded by Machiavellian liberal diplomats, assistant professors, and career bureaucrats, he finds it hard to understand the moral revolutionary force which America and her people have exerted on the world for a century and a half. He is pessimistic about the possibilities of a forthright ideological offensive, based on the

traditional American faith in democratic revolutions, to weaken, and ultimately destroy, totalitarianism.

WHAT can be done? How can the European exile better contribute to the common anti-Communist struggle? How can his stay in America be made profitable both for the American people and for the suffering people of his own country? There are, it seems to me, four lines of action which should be explored:

(1) There ought to be a broadening and intensification of active political work directed at each exile's home country. In addition to making the greatest possible contribution to the fight against Communism, this kind of work would also prevent the exile from becoming demoralized by the infectious ease of American life. It would transform his status psychologically from a "stipendist" to a resistance leader. Therefore, I believe the facilities of Radio Free Europe should be expanded as much as possible, both to increase its radius in the Communist world and to improve its programs. But radio is not the only form of political struggle. The exiles should be given the means to prepare and arrange for the distribution of leaflets, pamphlets, booklets, and underground literature of every type. Such work is being done on a major scale by Americans and Germans in West Berlin, and, as a result, both East Germans and the Soviet forces stationed among them are the least reliable of Stalin's subjects.

(2) Exiles in America should be exposed to every possible facet of the American democracy, and not through conducted "quickie" tours either. The East European socialist should be placed in contact with American labor leaders, should be encouraged to observe the functioning of American unions in Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, Toledo, and other great industrial centers. The exile peasant leader should spend most of his time in the Midwest farm belts, studying the varied forms of American agricultural life. The intellectual should be encouraged to tour American universities, and so on.

All of these exiles should be permitted to learn at first hand what makes democracy work in America, what it means to Americans. The exile will then have the chance to learn that political power in America is rarely reserved for the few, but is essentially an open door to all. He should study the operation of sectional, industrial, labor, agricultural, and cultural pressures, and how all of these must be harmoniously reconciled in a national policy capable of being defended before the electorate. These are things the American takes for granted, but they furnish an inspiring lesson of which the exile is still only dimly aware.

(3) Means should also be devised to give the entire American people the benefit of the exiles' knowledge and experience. The Free Europe organization should encourage and arrange lecture tours and personal appearances; it should help the exiles establish contact with editors, publishers, and working journalists, with business, labor, and other civic groups. Furthermore, it should drastically revise its present emphasis on lengthy, scholarly, and "private" publications written in East European languages, and concentrate instead on short popular publications in English, intended for wide distribution. At the present time, many of the popular books which deal with East Europe are full of ignorant misstatements, and quite a few of them are written from a neo-Communist viewpoint. A series of monthly or semi-monthly monographs should be started similar in style to the Foreign Policy Association bulletins, to provide background information on and expert evaluation of contemporary events.

(4) Finally, and most important, the exile must be provided with American colleagues who have the same seasoned understanding of Communism that he has. All of the above recommendations, which seem so simple and logical, have not been translated into action primarily because of this lack of understanding on the part of so many in the American leadership. The exile is disheartened, not because effective potential leadership does not exist in America, but because it is kept

on the sidelines. Anyone with a slight knowledge of American intellectual life will recognize that the American writers, thinkers, historians, and journalists who have the most thorough knowledge and understanding of Communism and its methods, and the deepest commitment to the struggle against totalitarianism, are pretty much excluded from America's official, semi-official, and private anti-Communist activities. Regardless of their political differences (there are, among them, conservatives, liberals, and socialists), they have emerged from the experience of the past decades with a sophisticated expertness concerning the true nature of the Communist threat. They are rarely rattled by Communist tactical shifts; and really, should it be held against them that they are supremely concerned with the fate of the peoples under totalitarian rule? Would the democratic cause not have fared better if we had had the benefit of their solid knowledge and deep-rooted concern in handling the Korean question instead of having to depend on the ignorance, "realism," and cleverness of the Machiavellian liberals?

IN EUROPE, the last three decades have shown that you cannot destroy an ideological enemy without being yourself ideologically prepared. Thousands of people have endured misery, destruction, and dictatorship because what should have been ideological wars—against Nazism and Fascism, against Communism—have been conducted by diplomats and bureaucrats in conventional terms. Both in the League of Nations and in the United Nations, the diplomats have refused to fight ideas with ideas, and have contented themselves with pulling undercover diplomatic strings while the world burned. Let us remind ourselves again that Talleyrand showed himself a great diplomat because he worked in the service of a Europe united on a political principle; the French and British career diplomats of the 1930's proved themselves ineffective be-

cause they did not seriously believe in the principles on which their own democracies were founded. With "live and let live" as their motto, they tried to make deals with dictators, lost themselves in efforts to discover "practical" distinctions among Nazi, Communist, and Fascist totalitarians, and eventually placed their false hopes in the strength of French divisions whose morale had already been undermined. The diplomats and bureaucrats of our times, uninterested in ideas and concerned only with "expediency" and *Realpolitik*, follow ever shifting policies (flirting with Tito, or Franco, or the hopelessly decadent feudal regimes of the Arab world) which, in the last analysis, rest on faith in sheer military force in the event of the showdown which these shifting policies bring ever closer. Their most potent weapon—democratic idealism—is left to rust in the attic.

The work of an architect cannot be done by a mason. American money invested in anti-Communist activities can only bring results if the Americans who lead the struggle understand it. ("By the same token, even the most effective independent anti-Communist enterprises can do little if they are hampered by an inconclusive official United States policy"—an informed American who read this manuscript commented to me.) If official, semi-official, and private American groups are interested in a serious crusade for freedom all over the globe, the political exile from East Europe will wholeheartedly become part of that crusade. He will no longer consider himself an orphan, but rather an integral member of a true international of democracy, passionately dedicated to the universal establishment of liberty. But America must not wait longer to summon its militant democrats of experience and understanding to lead a world effort of the oppressed peoples against totalitarian reaction; otherwise the victims of Communism will not be able to rid themselves of it without world carnage.